



Module V

Supporting Families During Deployments

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Now we will start Module 5 - SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENTS. We live in a complex world and are fighting wars on multiple fronts. The frequency and duration of deployments and training requirements place increased stress on the warfighter and makes caring for families challenging. According to Gen Schwartz, "You could not be engaged in a more noble pursuit. It is good to know that we have here the perfect representation of warrior-spouses representing our great Air Force."

Many of you are familiar with frequent and extended deployments. The pangs of separation are difficult; however, families endure hardships as they wait on the member to return. They do it with ingenuity and courage. Resiliency is required whether the member is deployed, prepping to deploy, or shouldering responsibilities on the home front. It is necessary that Key Spouses understand the readiness process and empathize with families geographically separated from their loved ones.



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Objectives

- Define common terms associated with deployments
- Discuss emotional cycle of deployments
- Explore ways to prepare families for separation
- Explore ways to prepare families for reintegration
- Identify readiness resources

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The goal of this module is to accomplish the following objectives:

- We will define common terms associated with deployments
- discuss emotional cycle of deployments
- explore ways to prepare families for separation
- explore ways to prepare families for reintegration, and
- identify readiness resources.



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DEPLOYMENT TECHNOLOGY

- **Readiness:** A military concept embedded in the community's culture to denote a state of preparedness, and the ability to anticipate a situation before it occurs
- **Equilibrium:** New normal, baseline family/work activity
- **Pre-Deployment:** Before member departs for deployed location. This is a time of preparation and planning
 - Complete Pre-deployment checklist, Appendix I
- **Deployment/Sustainment:** Member is carrying out their duties at the deployed location; family members maintain the home front
- **Reunion/Reintegration:** Member returns from deployment and reintegrates into home, family, work, and community

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The Key Spouse is a family readiness program, and Key Spouses serve as members of the unit's team and help provide a safety net to increase unit family readiness. This concept is essential to the survival and well being of the member's ability to perform their jobs downrange. This module introduces you to tools and resources that will help prepare and sustain families during deployments. Some of you have probably heard the phrase Air Expeditionary Force "Bucket" or heard someone say "we are in the bucket"; however, you may be surprised to hear new terminology. This attests to how quickly the Air Force mission changes and expands to meet today's culture.

- The term **Readiness** is a frequently used concept within the military culture to emphasize the importance of being prepared and anticipating a situation before it occurs.
- The term **Equilibrium** means a new normal or baseline family or work activity.
- The term **Pre-deployment** refers to the time period before a member departs for the deployed location. This is a time of preparation and planning.
- **Deployment or sustainment** is a term used when a military member supports a mission at a location other than the home station, and family members maintain the home front.

- **Reunion or Reintegration** refers to the time when a member returns from deployment and reintegrates into home, family, work, and community.



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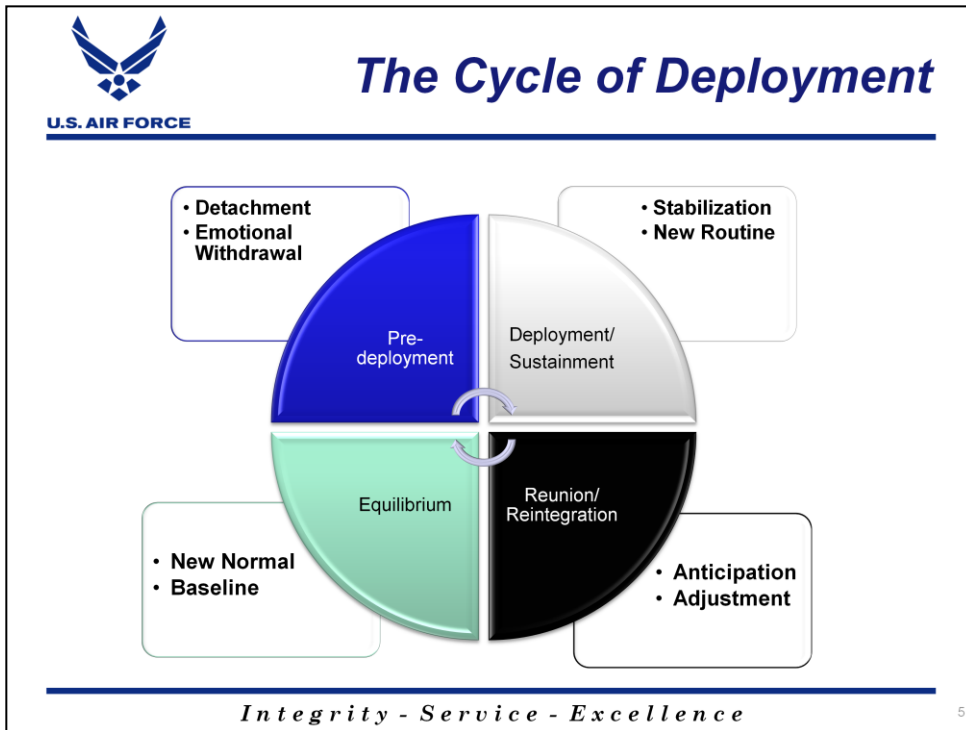
DEPLOYMENT TECHNOLOGY (Cont'd)

- **Joint Expeditionary Taskings (JETS)**, aka, “In Lieu of Taskings”: Characterizes the AF combat-focused mindset and joint posture; AF support of the fight however and whenever tasked
- **Bands/Blocks**: A System That Allows the Air Force to Posture Forces in timelines to Conduct Military Operations...Band refers to the ratio of time home vs. time deployed
- **AEF Cycles/Buckets**: Air Expeditionary Force Cycles provide predictability in deploying members; replaced by bands/blocks; however, you may still hear AEF reference

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- The phrase **Joint Expeditionary Taskings**, also known as, “In Lieu of Taskings” characterizes the Air Force combat-focused mindset and joint posture meaning the Air Force support of the fight however and whenever tasked.
- **Band or Blocks** is a system that allows the Air Force to posture forces in timelines to conduct military operations. Bands refer to the ratio of time home versus time deployed.
- **Air Expeditionary Force Cycles or buckets** provide predictability in deploying members. This term was replaced by bands or blocks mentioned previously; however, you may still hear Air Expeditionary Force referenced.



We defined the deployment cycle earlier in the terminology section. Future slides will define the Key Spouses role in each cycle. This is a visual representation of the Cycle of Deployment.

- Once a member hears that he or she is deploying, there is the shock or protest by the member and family members. No time is a good time to be deployed. Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, weddings, and graduations will be missed due to the deployment.
- Too often, family members deny the possibility of duty separation and pretend it is not going to happen. There may be a sense of despair or depression where anger may be expressed at the system or each other. This denial can be emotionally harmful. This may be the point where the member or family member detaches to avoid the hurt. For example, they talk as if the spouse has already deployed and begin leaving the spouse out of activities, etc.
- Once separation occurs, families may find themselves unprepared. Once the member leaves, everyone adjusts to the routine. Then preparation for the return begins.
- Then, the day finally arrives and the family is reunited. It sounds easy, but depending on the health of the family, these stages may be difficult. It is important to understand these stages because it will give you some insight on calling a week after the member leaves and the family is distraught and then calling one or two weeks later and the tone of the spouse is different. After 2-3 weeks, there is a sense of confidence that I can handle this.
- Families, for the most part, are very resilient. It helps when you have peers to communicate with and provide you with a sense of belonging.

Notice the circles. The cycle continues; however, some predictability is built into the system.



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Key Spouse Role

■ Pre-deployment

- Establishes and maintains contact with families
- Encourages family attendance at unit or A&FRC briefings
- Participate in pre-deployment activities

■ Deployment/sustainment

- Ensures 100% contact with separated families
 - 30-365 Day deployments/TDYs/remote assignments
- Encourages families to notify unit leadership when leaving the area for an extended time
- If unable to contact family, call the CC or First Sergeant

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Deployments can be a difficult time for families due to the geographical separation.

Make sure you are aware of what leadership needs are when dealing with this issue.

You will want to know what your responsibilities are and what your expectations are.

The following cover the Key Spouse role in support of expeditionary families.

During Pre-deployment, the key spouse

- Establishes and maintains contact with families
- Encourages family attendance at unit or Airman & Family Readiness Center briefings
- Participates in pre-deployment activities
- During Deployment and sustainment, the key spouse
- Ensures 100% contact with separated families during 30-365 Day Deployments, temporary duty or remote assignments.
- Encourages families to notify a member of the unit leadership team when leaving the area for an extended period of time.
- If you are unable to contact family, call the commander or first sergeant

immediately and always follow-up on “nagging” concerns.

- Respond to verbal requests for help and learn to recognize non-verbal cues.



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Key Spouse Role (Cont'd)

- **Reunion/reintegration**
 - **Participates in welcome home activities**
 - **Encourages attendance at briefings**
- **On-going**
 - **Responds to verbal requests for help**
 - **Learns to identify non-verbal requests**

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Military Family Separations are a Reality.

Understanding the stages of deployments will help family members prepare and manage separations.

Key Spouses will take part in Reunion and reintegration activities.

- You will participate in welcome home activities and encourage attendance at briefings

After the spouse returns the key spouse will

- respond to verbal requests for help and learn
- Learns to identify non-verbal requests



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Preparing for Separation

- **Organize documents**
 - **Deployment checklist (Appendix I)**
 - **Powers of Attorney**
 - **Wills**
 - **Benefits**
 - **Insurance (i.e., Service Members' Group Life Insurance—SGLI)**
 - **Family Care Plans**
- **Review family and household responsibilities**
 - **Vehicle/house maintenance**
 - **Finances**
 - **Child/family member/pet care**
 - **School**

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It is important that spouses have appropriate documentation when faced with a geographic separation. This is not the Key Spouses' responsibility; however, it is helpful to be aware. A Sample Deployment Checklist is available in your Key Spouse Reference Guide. It can also be downloaded from Military OneSource. Married spouses will need a Powers of Attorney even though they may be co-signers on family documents.

- Complete a Special Power Of Attorney. This allows access to financial information. Power of Attorneys are used to give another individual the ability to take care of certain responsibilities on behalf of the active duty member. Even though individuals may be married, a spouse will still need a POA to take care of personal items on the behalf of the deployed member.
- Address member/family Wills: It is a good idea to have something in writing about the wishes of your loved ones. This can be done at the base legal office by appointment. This is something that needs to be addressed in advance.
- Ensure SGLI, Service members' Group Life Insurance designations is updated and current. Contact Military Personnel Element for more information. This can be accomplished on line through Virtual MPF. SGLI: It is very important to make sure the deployed member's information is updated and current with Military Personal. This can be accomplished online through Virtual MPF.
- Update Family Care Plans. It is important that every family has some type of family care plan in place, regardless of their marital status. We cannot predict emergencies, but we can plan for them and make sure loved ones, children, pets and other dependents are cared for if something should happen.
- Discuss family and household responsibilities. It is important to discuss who will be the point person for certain tasks during deployment and determine if outside help is needed.
- Also families need to discuss how they are going to:
 - Communicate over the miles
 - Parent over the miles
 - Take care of finances
 - Take care of properties, such as homes (lawn care), automobiles (oil changes and maintenance) etc
- Deployment Checklist: You can check with the Airman and Family Readiness Center or Military OneSource to see if they have additional information on how to prepare for deployments. There is a sample checklist in your Key Spouse Reference Guide mentioned previously.
- It is important to remember that the only families that are required to have a Family Care plan on file

are those who are single parents and military married to military. Remember accidents can happen at any time. We do not plan for them, but you can plan to be prepared.



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Helping Families Deal with Separations

■ Managing stress

- Talk about concerns
- Work out solutions *before* member departs
- Explore effective stress relief techniques
- Connect with resources
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Maintain a sense of humor and a good attitude

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- Adequate preparation for all family members is the key to minimizing problems that will inevitably arise during a duty separation. It is much healthier for families to face issues directly and become better prepared to positively address the life style changes brought about by separation.
- The importance of education, pre-separation briefings, knowing support resources, and preparation cannot be overstated to aid in stress reduction.
- Having a sense of control over events is a significant moderator of the stress associated with separation. We all desire some sense of control even in the face of uncontrollable situations. Feeling of no control over a situation can lead to characteristics of learned helplessness. The perception of even some control can be enough to lessen most negative responses and become a base for building positive coping behaviors. Develop a “can do” resilient attitude. Encourage communication with spouses, children, friends, co-workers, and significant people in the family’s life



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Helping Families Deal with Separation (Cont'd)

- **Children and deployments**
 - Tend to mimic parent's behavior
 - May "act out" feelings
- **Some helpful hints**
 - Keep children informed and share feelings
 - Maintain stable environment
 - Talk about what will happen when parent leaves and what will be different when parent returns
 - Foster a sense of security—be consistent in "kind but firm" discipline practice
 - Engage in family reintegration activities

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One of the biggest concerns expressed by spouses is for their children.

Here are some helpful hints:

Be prepared for everyone to experience various feelings, and children are no exception.

Children experience the same emotions as the parent. In fact, they tend to mimic the parent's actions.

Allow children to discuss their feelings about the deployment.

Include children on discussions about changes about to occur in the family.

Encourage parents to allow for one-on-one time with the children.

Establishing and keeping routines are important; some roles may have to be reassigned.

Security is a big issue for children – refer parents to professionals if this becomes a disrupting issue .

The same is true for disciplining children—remain consistent.

Reunion activities will help to mitigate stress of mom or dad being inserted into child's routine.

The Bottom Line: Plan ahead. Nothing can defeat a good plan. There may be adjustments but the goal is clear and obtainable



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Reunion and Reintegration

- **Well-planned reunions yield good result**
 - Be flexible and adapt to change in plans
 - Involve everyone in planning the reunion
- **Reintegration is a process--not an event**
 - Change happens (each separation is different)
 - Take it slow in reestablishing relationships
 - Different for each member of the family
 - Avoid generalizations such as “should”
- **Communicate changes**
- **Allow time to readjust**
- **Note uncharacteristic behavior/may need to seek assistance through available resources**

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Reintegration is a process, not an event and the process begins before the member leaves

- Reunions go as well as you plan
- Be flexible
- Involve everyone in planning the reunion
- Everyone changes – with each deployment everyone changes
- Each person handles stress differently and if anyone is having particularly difficult problems, refer to professionals
- Take it slow and communicate
- The adage, time is a great healer, it truly is; however, for our families, the next deployment comes all too soon.



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Readiness Resources

■ Base helping agencies

- Airman & Family Readiness Center, Family Member Programs, Chaplains, Family Advocacy Program, Health And Wellness Center, Mental Health, Sexual Assault Prevention Response, Legal

■ Child Care Programs

- Give Parents a Break, Extended Duty Care, Returning Home Care

■ Separation support groups

■ Military Family Life Consultants, non-clinical counseling

■ AF Aid Society community enhancement programs

■ Unit/wing/community activities

■ Military OneSource: www.militaryonesource.com

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There are some resources provided to spouses. The list covers everything from child care programs, Air Force Aid programs to web sites, books and magazines.

Provide Air Force Aid Society Programs handouts.

Refer to installation-specific resources.

Highlight resources in Air Force Family Resource Guide: Websites, books, etc. that would be beneficial.



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Readiness Support Wrap Up

- **Military family separations are a reality**
- **Understanding stages of deployments will help family members prepare and manage separations**
 - **Before member departs**
 - **While member is gone**
 - **Notify someone when family member leaves the area**
 - **When member returns**
- **Proper planning reduces family stress**
- **Connect with on- and off-base resources**
- **Careful planning equals a successful reintegration**

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Military family separations are a reality. Understanding stages of deployments will help families prepare and manage separations before the member leaves, while they are gone, and after they return.

Please notify unit leadership when a family member leaves the area for extended time and when they return.

Proper planning on personal and family matters will reduce stress for those left behind.

Connect with on- and off-base resources.

Careful planning equals a successful reunion.

We have given you a lot of information. It may be beneficial to begin gathering resources for these and other events prior to your need for them. Keep a binder with on-base resources and numbers and be sure to update it occasionally.

You may have surmised by now that your role as a Key Spouse is vital to the unit team. The next module will provide you with practical steps on how to get started. We will also focus on self-care. This concludes Module 5.